



A Sales Playbook

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Involving all the playmakers in the sales effort

-Management

-Sales

-Customer Service and Support

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"If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else."

~Dr. Laurence J. Peter

Sales Playbook



Play-book noun (www.merriam-webster.com)

-one or more plays in book form

-a notebook containing diagrammed football plays

Many would say that football is the first thing that comes to mind when hearing the term playbook. Generally, all sports teams use a playbook to diagram the plays and how the playmakers should execute the play.

A sales playbook is a document that describes the roles and responsibilities for the selling team. Clear objectives and targets for performance should be designed to ensure that everyone has achievable goals that will contribute toward the overall business plan and bottom line. Most importantly, the playbook includes specified actions designed to meet those goals. Your sales playbook should answer the following questions:

Who is your ideal prospect/customer?

What is the value you/your company and product can provide?

Who are your biggest competitors? What are their strengths and weaknesses, and how do they compare to you?

What are the best practices of the salespeople in your company/industry? Who is successful and why? Make these best practices part of your overall sales methodology.

To accomplish the plays the entire sales organization must work together as a team towards these goals. The sales playmakers come from all positions on the team, including management, sales, and customer service. Included in the pages that follow are some important playmaking tips for management, sales and customer service and support.

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Management

The role of the sales manager is to coach and facilitate an environment where the salespeople can maximize their productivity and sales revenue. Sales managers have many other important tasks but the coach/facilitation role is the most important.

To that end, the sales manager must concentrate on making sure that everyone involved has their skills sharpened and stays focused on customer retention and growth. Some key components and best practices for the sales manager's role are listed below:

Encourage your sellers to spend more time on prospecting for new business. Sales managers need to do more than set clear expectations with each seller about the need to do more prospecting. Managers can drive the process to become more creative by brainstorming with the sales team about the best products/markets/regions to target in your prospecting efforts.

Managers need to spend more time motivating the entire sales team. It is easy for sellers and customer support personnel to get discouraged when customers are slowing down and reducing the frequency and quantity of their orders. Positive feedback and reinforcement and celebrations for new business are necessary.

Lead by example. Partner with your salespeople at current clients, especially key accounts. Now is the time to go on more joint sales calls, even if the purpose of the call is to simply thank a current customer for their business. Personally get involved in prospecting for new business. Spend some time calling or emailing new prospective customers. This will help to motivate the sellers, while showing that you are willing and able to bring in new business yourself.

Influence other departments to get involved in the sales process. If every person at your company who interacts with current and new customers can do something extra to impress a customer, you will do a better job at customer retention than your competition.

Be pro-active in helping your current client base. If you don't already know, make sure that you understand what has changed or is happening to your customer's customers. Be sure to ask your current clients "How has the economy affected your business, and what can we do to help? "

Be sure to target your sales efforts at new markets and client segments. It may be likely that some of your traditional markets have atrophied. Those who do the best in this economy continue to be creative and persistent at going after new sales opportunities.



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Sales

Although salespeople have many roles, we will focus here on two key components of the job which are strategic prospecting and pre-call sales planning. Some best practices are listed below.

Strategic Prospecting Even the most experienced sales professionals tend to make several common mistakes when they prospect. As a result, their win ratio and overall results don't meet corporate and management goals, and also demotivate the individual performer. Salespeople who are strategic prospectors differentiate themselves in the following two ways:

- They focus their time and energy on the best opportunities for new business.
- The best sales professionals are creative about gaining access to new accounts, whereas average salespeople rely exclusively on cold calling.

Pre-Call Sales Planning is clearly one of the most fundamental and important skills of a salesperson. The pre-call sales planning process doesn't have to take long, nor does it always need to be written down, but it should address these 4 core elements:

1. **Your Sales Call Objective:** What specific results do you want to accomplish with this customer at the conclusion of the sales call? Your objectives need to also take into consideration factors such as "what can I do to strengthen the business relationship with this client" and "what can I do to help this customer during difficult economic times?"
2. **Critical Questions to Ask the Customer:** A few good questions must always be part of your sales call planning process. Some examples include: "*What has changed since our last conversation?*", "*How can we help you?*" and "*What are you finding difficult in your business today?*"
3. **Benefits and Value to the Customer:** What benefits will you highlight about your sales solution? Can you offer the customer a new or different product or service that will provide value? When you do pre-call planning on benefits and value statements, it helps you to avoid the mistake of feature dumping your way through a sales call.
4. **Possible Objections:** Depending on the product or service that you intend to highlight during the sales call, you can probably anticipate the most likely objections. How will you respond? What is your fallback plan if the customer says no?



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Customer Service & Support



The role of the customer service professional is to help differentiate your company by providing outstanding service to customers, requiring both excellent communication and problem solving skills. Selling is a team sport, and customer service and support are essential for sales success.

Customer Service Facts that Cannot Be Ignored

- One extremely satisfied customer will tell 2 to 5 others about their positive experience.
- One extremely dissatisfied customer will tell 5 to 20 others about their negative experience.
- Up to 90% of extremely dissatisfied customers will stop doing business with you without letting you know that they are leaving.

Customer Service Best Practices

Outstanding customer service builds loyalty and customer retention, which ultimately improves your bottom line. To implement outstanding customer service build a culture that always follows these customer service best practices:

All customers expect and deserve responsiveness, respect and reliability from you. Each and every customer interaction is an opportunity to build customer loyalty.

Ask questions and listen for the customer's needs and critical expectations. You cannot meet or exceed the customer's expectations if you don't know what is most important to each customer.

Follow-up with your customer, particularly when it will be unexpected. The follow-up action can be a telephone call, an email, or a thank you note.

Use a team approach to customer service. Every person who interacts with customers needs to adopt a customer service-oriented approach. A common mistake is to overlook the potential contribution of your technical service, back-office, and production personnel to making the overall customer experience a positive one.

Finally, if everyone, including management, sales, and customer service all seek to provide service that falls into what we call the **Service Surprise Zone**, you will continually "**wow**" your customers and grow your business.

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